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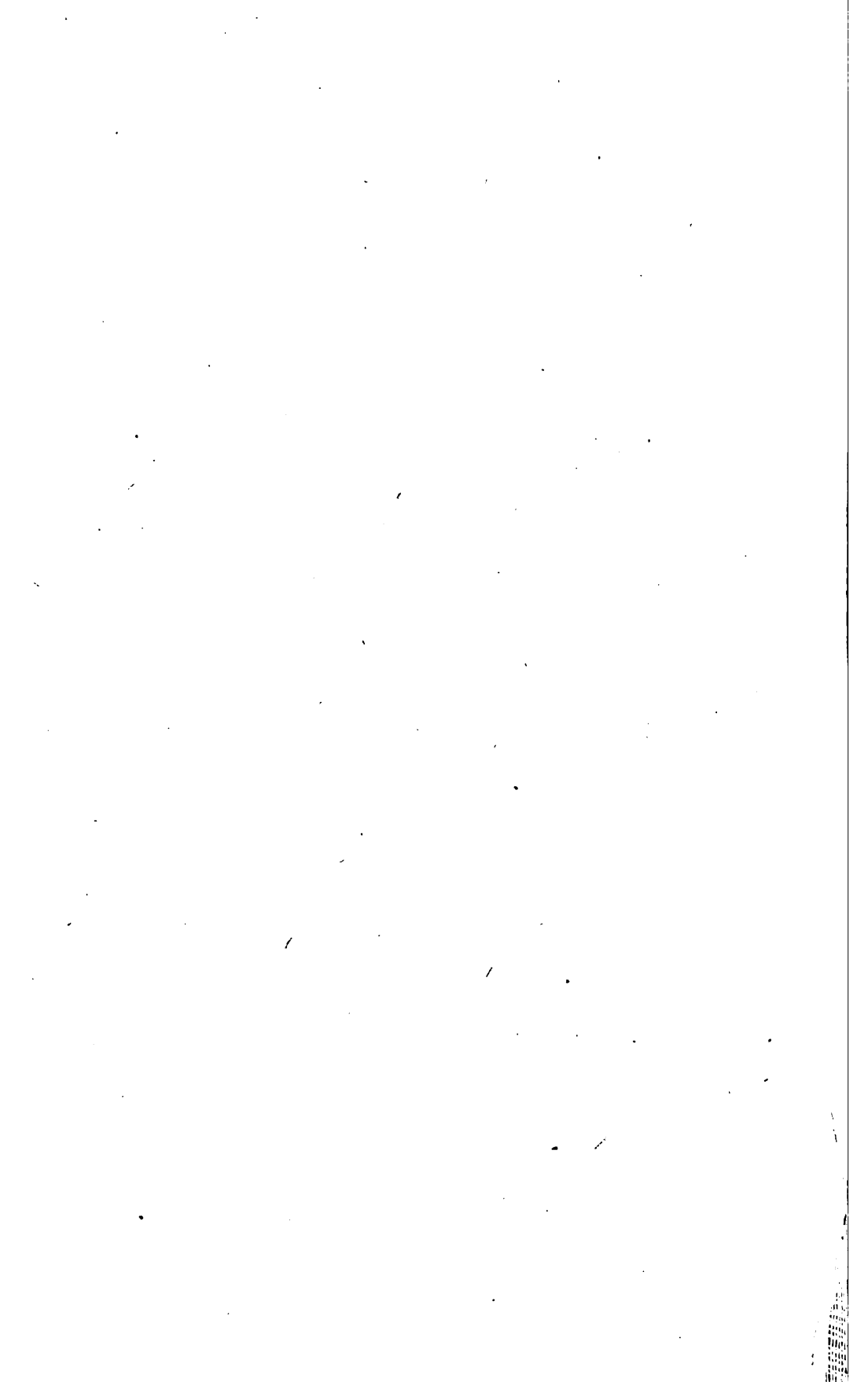


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THE

CHRISTIAN ENTHUSIASM.

AN ESSAY.

By CHARLES A. ALLEN.

"The Christian Religion is a mighty lever, by the help of which degraded and suffering humanity has again and again been strengthened to lift itself out of the mire." — GOETHE.

THE
CHRISTIAN ENTHUSIASM.

By CHARLES A. ALLEN,

MINISTER OF THE CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH, NEW ORLEANS.

"That man is a Christian whose life and ethics grow out of the central root of Christianity, . . . the sacredness of the individual."—*Wendell Phillips*.

"The eminently Christian idea of the sanctity of all human life."—*W. E. H. Lecky*.

"The solemn sense of the infinite scale of human life is the chief characteristic of the Christian theory of existence."—*James Martineau*.

"No truth ever so inspires a human teacher as this truth of man's childhood to God."—*Phillips Brooks*.

"The men who stand where these currents of power flow through them, are leading the progress of the world."—*George Batchelor*.

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1888.

Unity School.
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Grain

"If the main characteristic of Christ were reduced to one phrase, it would be,—a passion for saving the lost."—*T. T. Munger.*

"For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost."—*MATT. xvii. 11.*

"Likewise I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."—*LUKE xv. 10.*

"Still thy love, O Christ arisen,
Yearns to reach these souls in prison!
Through all depths of sin and loss
Drops the plummet of thy cross!
Never yet abyss was found
Deeper than that cross could sound!"
"So to our mortal eyes subdued,
Flesh-veiled, but not concealed,
We know in thee the fatherhood
And heart of God revealed."

WHITTIER.

Reprinted from the "Unitarian Review" for April, 1888.

THE CHRISTIAN ENTHUSIASM.

Of late years, Christianity has often been compared with other religions, and has sometimes been represented as containing no distinctive truth. A Jewish friend gave me recently an essay on the Sermon on the Mount, which claims to prove that every sentence of this Sermon was borrowed from the teachings of Jewish Rabbis or from well-known phrases of Jewish worship. And Mr. Higginson, likewise, in his essay on the Sympathy of Religions, which gives one key-note of the Free-Religionist movement, finds in the sacred books of other religions and the sayings of certain philosophers parallels, as he thinks, to all the important truths and precepts of the gospels.

This may be so, in the main. We may concede that Christianity has gathered up many fragmentary truths, which prophets and sages had taught the world at other times. And yet, after all, there is something distinctive in Christianity,—something, which has done more for human welfare than the moral earnestness of Stoicism, or the humanity of Buddhism, or the zeal of Islam, or even the lofty faith of Israel,—a religious enthusiasm which, though often dimly apprehended and grievously perverted, was a new inspiration in the world, and is to-day the heart's blood of our Christian civilization and the great hope of the world's progress; so that the words of the Apostle may now be used of Christianity with a far deeper meaning than he himself intended, "There is none other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved." This religious enthusiasm of

NOTE.—Some verbal changes have been made in this essay since it was printed in the *Unitarian Review*, and additional notes are appended, which are referred to by figures in the text of the essay.

reverent, hopeful * faith and love, that looks upon the vilest man of any race as one whom God would save † and “for whom Christ died,” was from the first the most distinctive sentiment of Christianity. And the secret of this enthusiasm was a truth which Christianity alone has taught,—the idea of the immeasurable value of every human soul. Says Lecky, in his sketch of Early Christianity ‡:—

The entire movement I have traced, displays an anxiety, not only for the life, but also for the moral well-being, of the castaways of society, such as the most humane nations of antiquity had never reached. This minute and scrupulous care for human life and human virtue in the humblest forms, in the slave, the gladiator, the savage, or the infant, was indeed wholly foreign to the genius of Paganism. It was produced by the Christian doctrine of the inestimable value of each immortal soul. It is the distinguishing and transcendent characteristic of every society into which the spirit of Christianity has passed. The first and most manifest duty of a Christian man was to look upon his fellow-men as sacred beings; and from this grew up the eminently Christian idea of the sanctity of all human life.§

Neither Judaism nor Stoicism nor Buddhism nor Mahometanism has been able to kindle the Christian enthusiasm.|| because they have never apprehended the Christian idea. Judaism was blinded by its race-exclusiveness, Stoicism by a certain kind of pride,¶ Mahometanism and Buddhism by

* “Those who would for a moment know his [that is, Christ’s] heart and understand his life, must begin by thinking of the whole race of man, and of every member of the race, with awful reverence and hope.”—*Ecce Homo*, p. 180.

† 1 Tim. ii. 4.

‡ *European Morals*, ii. pp. 18, 34 (Appleton, 1887).

§ “The solemn sense of the infinite scale of human life is the great characteristic of the Christian theory of existence.”—Martineau, *Endeavours*, p. 483.

|| Even if we regard this as simply the highest manifestation of the same “enthusiasm of humanity” that is found in Buddhism and elsewhere, yet the fact that, as manifested in Jesus, it was the highest ever known, gives him the Spiritual leadership of mankind, and makes his religion the *ideal* religion to which all other religions must rise.

¶ “Pride, which looks within, making man seek his own approbation, was not only permitted in Stoicism; it was even its leading moral agent.”—Lecky, *European Morals*, i. 195. This created a feeling of exclusiveness. And, besides this pride, there was a contempt for enthusiasm, which prevented the Stoics from feeling the full meaning and power of their doctrine of human brotherhood, and therefore from apprehending the Christian idea. “The framework or theory of benevolence might be there, but the animating spirit was absent.” “They declared war against the

their lack of faith in the Fatherhood of God. But, on the other hand, the influence of this idea can be traced in Christian lands from the beginning of Christian history, though at times in strange forms. We find it in the Apostle's precept, "Honor all men"; in the democratic spirit, that from the first put the slave and the poor on a level with the rich and the noble; in the philanthropic and missionary zeal* of the Early Church; in the world-wide missions of Catholics and Protestants; in Sisterhoods of Charity and Brotherhoods of Mercy; in the secret baptism of Indian babes by Jesuit priests in Canada,† and even in the bloody persecutions of heresy;‡ in the English revival of ritualism, which was accompanied, and perhaps originated, by a remarkable zeal in humanitarian labors; in the Calvinistic dogma of the Sovereignty of God, which really meant an assertion of the rights of human nature against the despotisms of pope and king, and of the dignity of every soul as responsible in the last resort to God alone, and as made greater than princes by simple loyalty to truth; in the vindication of human rights by many who were denounced as infidels¹ by a degenerate Church, which had forgotten the first lessons of the gospel of Jesus; and even in the democratic enthusiasm of the French Revolution, though it disowned both its lawful heritage of the Christian name and the Christian beliefs out of which it had grown,—for, during many ages past, these beliefs in God and immortality had nurtured a feeling of the worth of human nature, until this feeling became a habit in the blood, which in the noblest souls developed into an

whole emotional side of our being, and reduced human virtue to a kind of majestic egotism." Therefore they "could never found a true or lasting religion of benevolence." Lecky, i. pp. 189-192.

* Philanthropic and missionary zeal and the democratic spirit are not peculiar to Christianity. But, as these are developed in Christendom, we observe in them a distinctive *motive* and *quality*, which show the influence of the Christian idea.

† This, though superstitious to us, yet showed an intense feeling of the value of souls.

‡ The feeling of the value of souls made good men, in a coarse and cruel age, willing to persecute for the sake of saving innocent souls and perhaps the heretics, too, from the supposed danger incurred by heresy. But the intolerant spirit itself grew out of the feeling that church-unity is supremely important; and this feeling we can trace back to the enormous influence of the traditions of the unity and grandeur of the old Roman Empire. Intolerance, therefore, was of heathenish origin, and utterly contrary to the spirit of Jesus. (Luke ix. 49, 50, 54-56.)

enthusiasm of humanity, even when the beliefs themselves were blindly rejected. Though mingled often with the superstitious and cruel barbarisms that the heathen ages bequeathed, or forced for a time by ignorance or in violent reaction against oppression and wrong to take wild shapes and speak strange tongues, like the first disciples, yet this Christian belief in the sanctity of all human life has been slowly purifying the Church, and manifesting its power in fairer shapes, and in the great reforms of the present time finding eloquent voice for the gospel of the Son of Man. It is this enthusiastic faith in man* that kept alive in Christendom the democratic spirit, and often fermented in democratic movements, and voiced itself in democratic lyrics like "A man's a man for a' that." Though often repressed and apparently crushed, when Christianity became corrupt, yet it has broken out again in unexpected ways. In the great crises of Christian history,—as in the struggle of the Church for popular rights against the Feudal power, and in the struggle of the people against the alliance of Feudalism with a worldly Church, and, again, in the struggles of nations against their royal despots and of reformers against spiritual tyranny,—this enthusiastic faith in man, which is essential Christianity, has repeatedly saved our European civilization.

It is this spirit that vitalizes the New Testament, the accepted hand-book of our religion, though even this book holds much that was as transient as the fashion of tunics and sandals in the time of Jesus. Precisely how far he accommodated the expression of his great thoughts to the ignorance of his time, so that he might be understood at all, or how far his language was misapprehended and carelessly reported by his hearers, it is impossible to tell. Some of his precepts, or certainly the phrasing of them, were intended to apply to only the emergencies of the time. And it is not just to belittle his spiritual greatness by pointing out phrases or sayings, which will not accord with the teachings of modern science and ethics; for he could not have risen above

*This is very different from the Teutonic spirit of personal independence.

the scientific conceptions of his time, and some special precepts may be obscured by the dull perceptions of the disciples whose memory treasured them. The main ethical principles that he taught are obvious, however; and these transcend the ethical teachings of any sage or prophet before him.* But it was not his science, his politics, his economics, or even his ethics, that expressed his peculiar inspiration and gave him his influence in history. These were almost as incidental as the Aramaic dialect that he used. They do not, therefore, constitute distinctive Christianity. They explain his peculiar power little more than the sediment and drift-wood of the Mississippi explain the mighty flood of waters that pours into the Mexican Gulf. It is, rather, the unique religious enthusiasm, pervading his life and glorifying his cross, that was the special gift of God through him to the world. And this, which has given to his words their marvellous vitality, is the element in the New Testament which alone can claim to be his distinctive religion.

Then, too, rather than any form of organized religion in later times — which, though bearing the Christian name, may be largely a medley of inherited paganisms, with but little of the Christian leaven — it is this distinctive spirit² that has the best right to be called “Christianity.” It is not fair to judge a religion by the historic forms or temporary institutions, through which it is slowly realizing its distinctive aim. It is rather by the ideal of its founder and the best results of his influence in history that the historic forms must themselves be judged; and therefore the measure of the proper Christianity of men † or institutions must be simply the degree in which they share this Christian spirit.

In the same way, by “Christian” ethics we may mean the virtue, or the total character, that is pervaded with the Christian spirit;³ for the real worth of a virtue depends on

* See Bierbower's *Morals of Christ* and Lecky's *European Morals*.

† Doubtless there are multitudes in Christendom, who show very little of the Christian spirit and are morally inferior to many heathen, and, therefore, are not properly Christians in the sense above described. Yet they are called “Christians” in another sense, namely, that by their reverence for Christian institutions and traditions they are placed *in a school of Christian influences*. “Christianity” is often used to mean this “School of Christ,” or the whole movement in history that has been more or less pervaded by Christian ideas and feelings.

its motive. And, because the Christian motive depends on certain religious beliefs, these beliefs are essential. Even in personal ethics there is no inspiration so powerful as the Christian. The thought of the inestimable value of our own souls because they are immortal, clothes every duty with divinest majesty; and virtue becomes transfigured to something fairer, when with the ethical reverence for the law of right is blended the Christian feeling of loving sonship to God.

In a well-known passage of *Wilhelm Meister*, Goethe speaks of "reverence for that which is beneath us" as the noblest kind of reverence, and as distinctively Christian; and, in the familiar last words of his Lenox address, Channing speaks of "reverence for humanity, the feeling of brotherhood, and of all men's relation to a common Father," as the distinctively Christian spirit. In this reverence for human nature, as preached by Channing,* we find the chief inspiration of the Unitarian movement. It was this that made Unitarianism peculiarly Christian, though other Churches denied it the name, and that kindled a distinctively Christian zeal in humanitarian work which at that time characterized Unitarianism. Channing included "the feeling of brotherhood and of all men's relation to a common Father," as part of the distinctively Christian spirit; and Christian Liberals have generally regarded the ideas of the Divine Fatherhood and the human brotherhood as distinctively Christian. But this is not strictly true. Stoicism also held these ideas, though without apprehending their highest meaning, and therefore without the reverence for human nature and the enthusiasm† of faith and love that are fostered by

* But many Liberal Orthodox to-day seem truer to the thought of Channing than some professed Unitarians. Says Rev. T. T. Munger, D.D., "Christ saw man at his true value and died to give expression to his estimate: he is man rightly weighing man." "The struggle of Christ in history is to bring men up to the point of duly valuing their fellow-men."—*The Appeal to Life*, p. 18. Says Rev. Phillips Brooks, D.D., "Upon the race and upon the individual, Jesus is always bringing into more and more perfect revelation the certain truth that man, and every man, is the child of God."—*The Influence of Jesus*, p. 12.

† Lecky says that Marcus Aurelius "almost realized the Christian type," but "seldom has such active and unrelaxing virtue been united with so little enthusiasm."—*European Morals*, i. p. 253. "In every age the Christian temper has shivered at the touch of Stoic apathy."—*Eccle Homo*, p. 130.

Christianity.⁴ For the Christian truth is not merely that all men are the "offspring" of God, as the Stoics said;* but it is, rather, the belief that even the most degraded soul is dear to the Infinite Heart, and is watched over by the Omnipresent Eye, and has an immortal destiny before it. Whatever God so loves † must therefore have inestimable value, and is worthy of our reverence. But, if we lose our faith in the Fatherly Love of God for every soul, we inevitably lose also this reverent feeling of the immeasurable value of every soul; and only out of reverent faith in man can rise the warmest love for man. The less we value anything, the less we love it; and, if we see in human nature nothing immortal and divine, we shall be apt to care for it but little. There are those indeed who, though without faith in God and immortality, are nobly philanthropic; but how much more hopeful and devoted their philanthropy might be, if inspired by the Christian enthusiasm! In most men, however, the instinctive feeling towards the degraded classes is simply contempt and aversion; and it is from precisely this natural feeling that Christianity would save us by its faith in the divine sonship and the immortality of all mankind.

It is not every form of the feeling of brotherhood, then, but only the *reverent* feeling, that is distinctively Christian; and, therefore, we say that reverence for human nature is a distinctive trait of Christianity. In Buddhism, for instance, we find the feeling of brotherhood as fully realized as is possible without a faith in the Fatherhood of God; and Buddhist humanitarianism, therefore, comes nearer than any other to the Christian sentiment, but it lacks the Christian reverence and hope. The same may be said of the Ethical Culture movement. It is nobly in earnest, but is never hopeful with regard to the future of mankind beyond this life, because it has no clear, strong faith in God; and what reverence it feels for human nature has been derived from Christian influences.

The highest humanitarianism, therefore, depends directly

* Acts xvii. 28.

† John iii. 16, 17; xii. 32; Rom. v. 8; Eph. i. 10; Col. i. 20.

or indirectly upon certain religious ideas.⁴ There will be a warmer enthusiasm for even the relief of the bodily needs of men, when the body becomes sacred in our reverent thoughts because it is the shelter of an immortal spirit. And still more sacred becomes every human soul, though ever so degraded, when we believe in a God who loves that soul. Says Martineau:—

There could be no reverence for lower natures, were there not, to begin with, the recognition of a Supreme Mind [who is perfect goodness]. But the moment that this recognition exists, we certainly look upon all that is beneath with a different eye; it becomes an object, not of pity and protection only, but of sacred respect.*

To some extent, this is true of our feeling towards even the brute creation. Because these are God's creatures and in some sense dear to Him, it forbids our causing them needless pain; and thus the true Christian spirit⁵ teaches mercy towards brutes more earnestly than even Buddhism does, without any of the Buddhist morbidness, which sometimes seems to respect the life of a brute as much as the life of a man.†

But the Christian idea of the divine sonship of human nature involves a deeper, more mystic faith in the essential unity of God and man, which must have greatly intensified the feeling of the sanctity of all human life. The Hebrew reverence for the holiness of God had set God and man apart with a gulf between, and made it impossible to feel the Christian reverence for human nature while God and man were sundered. The Greeks believed in the nearness of the gods to human affairs, or even in a constant Indwelling of God in man and nature; and Stoicism gave this latter thought a philosophic statement. But it had little practical power till it was blended with a faith in the Heavenly Father, and found an intense realization in the consciousness

* *Endeavours*, p. 474. I should qualify this passage by the words in brackets.

† Something like this Buddhist morbidness appears occasionally in Christian lands. A lady who is warmly interested in the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, remarked to me once with reference to our Associated Charities and Aid Society, probably more in jest than in earnest, "I don't care for your men and women, but the—dear little dogs!"

of Jesus. The saying that "I and my Father are one," whether really spoken by him, or expressing in later phrase the reverent feeling of the Early Church, suggests the idea of the Divine Indwelling in all human nature, without losing the idea of the transcendence of the Divine Holiness, which was the peculiar bequest of Hebrew piety. Both of these ideas were taught by the Greek Fathers as essential in Christianity, and were formally stated in the Nicene Trinity.* Thus in the reverence for Jesus as the full realization of this divineness which is latent in every man, or at least as a *symbol of the ideal humanity*,—that is, of the complete and conscious union of the human will and the Divine, which is the ideal destiny of all mankind,—the Christian enthusiasm found a genial soil.

But let us now turn the gospel pages again, and see what they tell us of distinctive Christian truth.

The Sermon on the Mount has been generally regarded as a summary of Christian principles, announced by Jesus at the beginning of his ministry. But this Sermon contains nothing that is really distinctive of Christianity, except as *a possible inference* from certain passages. Indeed, nowhere in all the early ministry is the distinctive idea of Christianity clearly taught. Only in the records of the later ministry, when Jesus had left Galilee and was dwelling "beyond Jordan," is this truth distinctly affirmed. In the gospel of Luke—the Gentile gospel, as it has been called—the traditions of this later ministry are preserved. They are omitted from the first two gospels,⁶ possibly because the broad humanity of these parables and sayings may have sorely hurt the bigoted patriotism of the Church in Jerusalem, whose traditions are reported in the first two Gospels; but to Luke, who was Paul's companion, these discarded anecdotes, which he found somewhere still repeated in Galilee or beyond Jordan, must have seemed a precious vindication of Paul's freer gos-

* But the doctrine of the Trinity is as much out of place in Christian worship and theology to-day, as a sentence of Greek would be in an English pulpit. Scholars can understand it aright; but the people cannot. It is valuable for what it tells us of the religious life of other times; but it is useless for the life of to-day.

pel, which was strongly opposed for a while by the other Apostles.

It is not strange, then, that our Jewish friends find nothing unique in the Sermon on the Mount. It is plainly more Hebrew than Christian. It was simply the fruit of those quiet Nazareth years, when Jesus studied the records of his nation's marvellous history and the wisdom of her great Prophets, and listened in the village synagogue to the teachings of the Rabbis, and thus gathered into his heart all the inspiration that his ancestral faith could give. It was a summing up of the most spiritual lessons that he had thus learned, for which the Old Testament furnished admirable texts, such as "truth in the inward parts," "mercy and not sacrifice," "man shall not live by bread alone." But these lessons were spoken by him, we must remember, with the authority of deep personal conviction, and probably also with a deeper insight into the meaning of them than any Rabbi or philosopher had ever gained. We must not be misled by the identity of words; the thoughts conveyed may not be always quite the same. Thus the law of love for our neighbor, as given in Leviticus, implies a limitation to Hebrew neighbors; and, when Jesus spoke of the Samaritan as a neighbor, the lawyer who had questioned him was evidently surprised. So, too, the Fatherhood of God, as taught by Jesus, means something tenderer and holier than it could have meant to Hebrew Prophet or Stoic Emperor, who never spoke of any fervent consciousness of constant communion in filial trust and love.

This Sermon, then, we may perhaps say, is the high-water mark of *his nation's* religious progress up to that time,—not of the whole nation, to be sure, but of the choicer prophetic souls, the Progressive Judaism of the age. For there may have been many,—Nicodemuses and Nathanaels,—both among the Rabbis and among the humblest Israelites, who were weary of the prevailing formalism, and perhaps were already thinking just these thoughts in their silent hearts,*

*Or, very likely, some of the Rabbis, such as Hillel and his school, may have already taught most or all of the lessons of the Sermon on the Mount.

which this young teacher put into gracious words. But, on the other hand, there is in this Sermon no hint of the purpose of God to put Jew and Gentile on equal footing,—which is one great theme of the later ministry and of Paul's epistles. There is nothing even like John the Baptist's contemptuous rebuke, "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." There is no hint of the warning — which Matthew puts far too early,* but of which we hear nothing in Luke till Jesus had "steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem"—that "many shall come from the East and the West and the North and the South, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out." And, further, what is even more significant, *there is no expression of interest in the degraded classes of his own nation.* The publicans and the heathen are mentioned almost as slightly as the Pharisees and the scribes; and "the sinners" are not mentioned at all.† The only words that may possibly hint a larger love for mankind are those words about the impartial grace of God that sends the sunshine and the rain upon the just and the unjust. But this goes no further than the lesson of the Book of Jonah,⁷—perhaps not quite so far. And, at best, it contains only a *germ*, still concealed and unsuspected, of the distinctive Christian doctrine.

But that which is distinctive in any great teacher's truth is learned, not from other men, but from himself and from God. His peculiar influence flows out from his peculiar genius and inspiration; and this is not so likely to be kindled in lonely meditation on what others have taught him (which is only a second-hand knowledge, after all), as in his own experiences. His distinctive doctrine is what he himself sees, as he comes into contact with the realities of human life. Therefore, to understand the distinctive gospel of Jesus, we must leave the Sermon on the Mount behind

* Because it is inconsistent with the indifferent spirit of the Sermon on the Mount towards "the heathen" and the positive command to the Apostles to avoid the Samaritans and Gentiles.

† That is, not in Matthew's version of the Sermon on the Mount. But in Luke's fragmentary report, "sinners" (vi. 32-4) is substituted for the "publicans" and "heathen" of Matthew (v. 46-7; vi. 7).

us, and follow the record of his life, and trace the development of his own thought.

We notice that, from the first days of his ministry, he was, like Buddha, "moved with compassion" for the sorrows and sufferings of men. His heart was full of tenderness. Even before the Sermon on the Mount, they brought to him "all sick people"; and, when he taught in the synagogues, he healed "all manner of diseases among the people." It was *this heart of love* that, more than any precept of the Sermon on the Mount, was the germ of distinctive Christianity; for even the precept of love to enemies⁷ did not distinctly teach this duty of self-sacrificing philanthropy.

Yet, at first, as I have said, he showed no interest in Gentiles and sinners; and from one expression, "Do not even the publicans the same?" we may fairly presume that few of this class were among his hearers at the time. But the love that at first cared for those who were sick and suffering in body soon began to reach out to those who were spiritually in "need of a physician." After Matthew, the publican, became a disciple, "many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples." A little later, at the time of the visit of two disciples of John the Baptist, Jesus speaks of being called "the friend of publicans and sinners"; * and Luke relates the story of "the woman which was a sinner" anointing the feet of Jesus in the Pharisee's house. The parables and precepts of the Galilean ministry make no other reference, however, to the publicans and sinners,—unless, perhaps, in one passage, as "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," though this may simply refer to the nation as a whole; and the instructions to the Twelve bid them avoid the Samaritans and Gentiles. But his warm heart soon drew to him the social outcasts, and wakened in them a hunger for better things, of which they had never before been conscious; and, as he came into close and familiar contact with them, he found unexpected treasures of goodness in these men and women whom respectable people

* Mentioned in Matthew, as well as in Luke, which shows that the humanitarianism of Jesus was not an invention of Luke and Paul, as some have strangely surmised.

despised. Thus it was that, besides the gospel of a pure and honest heart and childlike trust, which he had learned in the synagogue of Nazareth and the Rabbis' schools, he learned this other gospel of a warm human brotherhood and a reverent faith in man⁸ in the by-ways of Galilee and the slums of Capernaum,—a gospel which was taught him, not by the words of the wise and saintly, but by his own contact with the outcast and debased; not by "flesh and blood," but by the Spirit of the Father.*

And when at length he was forced to flee from Galilee, and, after wandering awhile in Gentile districts, began the last sad journey to Jerusalem, his heart was more than ever drawn towards these publicans and sinners, who, like him, were despised and rejected,—they because they were so evil, he because he was so good. Then come the parables, in which he teaches the new gospel,—the Good Samaritan, the Pharisee and Publican, the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Great Supper, the Lost Silver, the Lost Sheep, and the Prodigal Son, the last of which is called by Cunningham Geikie "the noblest of all the parables." Often had he heard the murmuring of the scribes at his familiarity with publicans and sinners, ever since in the Galilean days he had offended the scribes by eating with these outcasts in Matthew's house; and at last he framed the three exquisite parables of the fifteenth chapter of Luke to justify the ever-deepening humanity of his ministry. In the discipline of disappointment and trouble, his heart had been opened to see more clearly than at first what no saint or sage had ever taught, that man is always God's child, still dear to the Infinite Heart, and still having divine possibilities of goodness within him, though apparently lost like the sheep and the coin and the prodigal son; and that therefore these degraded men and women have a holy, imperative claim upon us for reverent pity, trust and love. Thus he entered into the depths of sorrow, and was despised and rejected, that he might teach more persuasively the all-embracing love of God and the glory of self-sacrifice, and thereby draw all men to-

* Matt. xvi. 17.

gether in the ties of a holy brotherhood. Out of suffering came the gospel that alone had power to save.*

But we must not forget that the secret of this compassion and of the longing to rescue these outcasts was not merely pity for their misery,† such as Buddha felt; and not merely a belief in the equal rights of men and the value of character as determining true rank, which also Buddha recognized. It was rather, as I have said, the reverent feeling (unknown to Buddhism and to every other faith) of the immeasurable value of every human soul, because God is its Father and immortality its heritage,—“for,” said he, “all live unto Him,”‡—a feeling that had gradually become clearer in his heart, as he had seen the possibilities of goodness in publicans and sinners. Says Phillips Brooks §:—

After the day when he told them the story which they never could forget, of how there was a man with a hundred sheep, and how one of them wandered from the flock and got astray among the hills, and of how the shepherd left all the rest, and went and found that one, and came down out of the hills singing, with the rescued sheep across his shoulders, —after that key-note of the preciousness of the individual⁹ had been struck, it never ceased to be heard through everything that Jesus said and did.

Even if we do not regard this humanitarian gospel as a later development in the ministry of Jesus, we must at least concede that it was part of his teaching. Matthew and Mark, to be sure, describe the aim of Jesus to have been always what it is implied to be in the Sermon on the Mount, —mainly an ethical aim: he attacked the hypocrisy of the religious classes, and was rejected at last as a reformer who

*The Sermon on the Mount begins its gospel with beatitudes which explain certain conditions of blessedness; that is, of salvation. But this gospel of mere *self-discipline*, which the Sermon on the Mount teaches, is inadequate even for self-salvation in the highest sense, without the gospel of enthusiastic *self-renunciation*; for only he who is willing to lose his life can truly find it. Each is called a “gospel,” because it offers a *secret of blessedness*.

†The humanity that is blessed in the parable of the Sheep and the Goats is merely the helpful pity that is shown by heathen. “All the nations,” means all outside of Israel. The heathen, if pitiful, will be blessed; but this does not make them Christians, and Christianity alone can give the highest blessedness. The parable simply teaches how the *heathen* world shall be judged.

‡Luke xx. 38.

§ *Influence of Jesus*, p. 112.

was mistaken for a revolutionist,—all of which was probably the favorite tradition of the Church in Jerusalem. But the passage from Isaiah, which Luke, perhaps putting it much too early,* represents Jesus as reading in the synagogue of Nazareth at the very beginning of his ministry, was probably meant by the Evangelist as a text for the whole subsequent ministry, and suggests that to Luke, as to Paul, its humanitarian aspect was more important than its merely ethical.† As the baptism of the Spirit fell upon him more abundantly, the preaching of Jesus became more than ever an eager appeal for reverent love¹⁰ towards brother-men and a proclamation of the all-embracing love of God. He began his ministry as simply a Jewish Rabbi; he ended it as one who would be the Saviour of all mankind. Surely, in this do we find the secret of his power. It was not the call for reform in Israel, but the appeal for more love towards man, more faith in man's sonship to God, and more trust in God's forgiving and redeeming love, that raised up such Apostles as Paul, and won the heart of the Gentile world, and poured a new life into the decaying civilization of the time, and gathered a vast fellowship of those who would love and trust their fellow-men as he had loved and trusted.

It was Paul, therefore, rather than Peter and James, who comprehended the meaning of Christianity. They were mainly ethical; he was also humanitarian. But even in the writings of Paul we are conscious, at times, of something narrower than that all-embracing love of Jesus, who, *because* he was so holy, could yet be patient and tender with

* Because the references to the widow of Sarepta and to Naaman implied the anticipated rejection of Israel and acceptance of the Gentiles, which it is not likely that Jesus would have spoken of at so early a date, since subsequently he commanded the Apostles to avoid the Samaritans and Gentiles and in the Sermon on the Mount betrays no interest in the Gentile world. The reference also to what he had "done in Capernaum" implies that he had been preaching for a good while already. This anticipation of the rejection of Israel must have come very slowly into the mind of Jesus, and only after repeated discouragements in his efforts to preach a reform in his nation.

Luke omits the instructions to the Apostles and some similar passages,—apparently unable to reconcile these with the humanitarian gospel of the later ministry.

† According to Paul, Christian humanitarianism accomplishes all that ethical precept can accomplish. "All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."—Gal. v. 14.

the most despised and degraded. Here, as elsewhere, the Apostles, and often the Church since their day, have failed to enter fully into the mind of Christ. Yet the true spirit of Jesus and the distinctive idea of Christianity have been ever more felt in Christian history; for the gospel pages have been always open, and the vivid colors of the parables have impressed men more deeply and shaped their lives more constantly than any words of the Apostles. It has been said that Paul was really the Founder of Christianity. But no! it was Jesus who created the Christian world, and by the imperishable power of his life and words poured out a stream of influence which has been regenerating¹¹ society. It was not "ethical passion" merely, or doctrinal zeal, so much as this exalted humanitarian enthusiasm, inspired by faith in man's sonship to God, that has really burned at the heart of the Christian movement and accounts for the growth and power of the Christian Church. "The love of Christ constraineth us"* has voiced the real motive of the noblest humanitarian and missionary work in Christian history. The story of him who was "the friend of publicans and sinners" has touched the hearts of men, and taught them pity and mercy,[†]¹¹ and made the slave an equal of the highborn, and urged the missionaries of the cross to labor and suffer in glorious self-sacrifice to save their fellow-men "for whom Christ died,"¹² and transmitted an ever-deepening feeling of the immeasurable value of every human soul.

The secret of Christianity, some say, is found in Jesus' personality; but what was it that made his person so commanding? No human life has power, unless it stands for some idea ‡ and thus attracts enthusiastic loyalty. The life needs this inspiration of ideas, just as much as the ideas need to be impersonated. An heroic or saintly life is great with

* 2 Cor. v. 14.

† "This sect set the first example of a homely, practical philanthropy, occupying itself with the relief of ordinary human sufferings, dispensing food and clothing to the starving and destitute."—*Ecos Homo*, p. 130. Lecky says that the suppression of the gladiatorial games was the work of Christianity.—*European Morals*, i. p. 282.

‡ "Every man's power is his idea, multiplied by and projected through his personality."—*Phillips Brooks*.

the grandeur of spiritual forces, of the very life of God Himself,* which this human life has assimilated. It was therefore the sublime idea incarnated in Jesus, the Word made flesh, that gave his personality such power; and this is what the Christian Church has apprehended more or less intelligently in its doctrine of the deity of Jesus.

How shall we convince the Buddhist, the Hebrew, the "Ethicist," that the world needs Christianity? Surely, not by any appeal to miraculous attestation, which the Buddhist can checkmate with traditions of greater wonders, and for which the ethicist cares nothing; not by the mere record of the deeds and words of Jesus, which our Jewish friends and many others will lay aside as largely unhistorical; but by first convincing men of the nobility of the Christian idea and of the incalculable value of the distinctively Christian enthusiasm,—saying nothing, perhaps, about Jesus, till men have felt the divineness of his truth, as it is incarnated to-day in Christian humanitarianism. No mere logic can convince men of "the love of Christ." "Not disputation, but holiness," said St. Bernard. Christianity must be its own evidence. Only the warm and reverent heart that loves the most degraded, because these also are God's children and our brethren, will ever make plain to doubting men what Christianity really means, and give it persuasive power, and win them to Christian faith.

How can our country be made a Christian land? Surely, not by putting any mere words into the national Constitution, or by merely calling ourselves Christians, or by professing discipleship to Jesus: for we want realities, not names; but by making his humanitarianism a controlling power in our national life, arbitrating in the present dissensions between rich and poor, guiding our treatment of the Chinese and the Indian, energizing and humanizing our charities, making our religion more Christ-like, and prompting men

* "It is idle to talk about the ethical constitution of the universe, unless there be in the universe ethical life." (Rev. George Batchelor: *Christian Register*, Nov. 10, 1887.) For to speak of ethical ideas in the universe is meaningless unless there be some superhuman self-consciousness whose thoughts these ideas are; and self-consciousness is the essence of personality.

and women even to go and live among the lowest classes, as some are doing now,* so as to understand their needs and win their trust. Our social and national life, even our Church life, is still pitifully lacking in Christian humanity. Jesus is adored; but his spirit is not yet all-pervasive. Millions take the Christian name; but Christ's enthusiasm is rare. The Christian life is still the narrow way, and "few there be that find it." We still need the baptism of the Spirit that Channing hailed,—not ethics merely, but Christianity. And when we have pervaded our nation with this divine enthusiasm, we have really Christianized it, whatever be the religious names that seem to divide us.

The Apostle's phrase, "the unity of the Spirit," † is often on our lips; but we need to ask ourselves, Do we really understand it? "The unity of the Spirit": yes, but of *what* spirit? There is a unity that is as broad as all rectitude and philanthropy; and there is a fellowship that includes even the publicans and sinners, because these also are God's children and have latent possibilities of goodness. This unity and this fellowship are Christian in a certain sense, and must be cherished. But if, on the other hand, we feel in any degree the Christian enthusiasm, must not our fellowship *for Christian work* and our unity of the Spirit *in the Pauline meaning* be limited to those who share this enthusiasm?

Is the career of Christianity drawing to a close? Not at all. It has but just begun. The divine enthusiasm of Jesus has been struggling for many centuries with the gross and cruel forms of heathenism that came down from the ancient

* Edward Dennison and others in London, and Father Huntington in New York.

† Paul defines Christianity, or "the Kingdom of God," as "righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Now, "the Holy Spirit"—or "the spirit of Christ," meaning the same thing according to Paul (Rom. viii. 9)—denotes what is *distinctive* in Christianity, as John the Baptist indicated (Matt. iii. 11; Acts xix. 2-5). It was often imaginatively conceived of in those times as a personal *emanation* from God, coming as a dove or as tongues of fire (Matt. iii. 16; Acts ii. 3, 4). But we have seen that the really distinctive feature of Christianity is its *new life* (John i. 4; v. 40; x. 10; 2 Cor. iii. 6; iv. 10; Gal. ii. 20; etc.) of enthusiastic *Christ-like* love towards God and man (Matt. xxii. 36-40; Luke x. 27-8; Gal. v. 13-22; 1 John iv. 16). And this, therefore, must be what is meant by the Holy Spirit. To share this enthusiasm is to be "inspired" in the Christian sense; and all true Christians are said to be inspired (Rom. viii. 1-17; 1 Cor. ii. 10-16; xii. 3, 13; Eph. ii. 18; iv. 3). Righteousness that is not "in the Holy Spirit," though it may be very noble, such as the Stoic type, is yet different from the Christian ideal.

world and often masqueraded under Christian names,—a struggle like that of the morning light with a murky day. But the spirit of Christ has been slowly gaining power, winning hearts, ascending thrones, conquering wrongs, leavening society, shaping civilization, and assimilating whatever was good in the past. Long ago it inherited the philosophic and ethic wisdom of the ancient world, making this a part of its own nobler fabric and asserting its right to appropriate for higher uses the treasures of other civilizations. On the foundations laid by Jewish saint and Gentile sage it built its own house of prayer and service, far grander than any dream of Rabbi or Stoic. And to-day the Mahometan and Buddhist will find their temples to be only the outer courts of this shrine of Christian faith, in which the final at-one-ment shall unite all the children of men as one family in God.*

On the Mount of Transfiguration, it is said, Moses and Elias were seen communing with Jesus “of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.” I can imagine that, on some holy height in the unseen world, not Moses and Elias only, but Zoroaster and Confucius, Aurelius and Epictetus, and many another saint and sage of the Gentile world, and the holy Buddha also, saintliest of all, may be drawn together in loving communion; but that among them stands the form of a Son of Man, before whom they all reverently bow. Surely, even Buddha would say, “Here is one who loved his fellow-men more than even I could love them, because he saw in even the most degraded of them the children of God and the heirs of immortality; he must be called the First-born Son; and in his name, which stands on earth for the Ineffable Love of Heaven, shall all nations at last draw near to God and all men become brethren.”

In conclusion, let us turn for a moment to the parable of the Prodigal Son. In those tender, reproachful words of the parable, “this my *son*,” “this thy *brother*,” we hear the voice of the Spirit still speaking to us as it spoke to Jesus, pleading with the happy, the prosperous, the blameless, to

* “Christianity, the home of man in God.”— *Phillips Brooks*.

love and help their wretched, sinful fellow-men, because these also are God's children and our brethren. These words are the divinest words of the gospel of Jesus. They breathe forth the innermost secret of that life which was one with God. Beyond them it is not conceivable that religion can ever go. They will forever be the inspiration of all that is fairest and holiest on earth. Here, if anywhere, is the assurance of the world's redemption from all the sin and suffering that now afflict it. And in these words of reverent, hopeful faith in man,—reverent, because he is dear to God's heart and has within him something divine; hopeful, because the ages to come will give ample opportunity for the education begun on earth,—we find the most distinctive truth of our religion.

ADDITIONAL NOTES.

1(p. 3.) WENDELL PHILLIPS ON CHRISTIANITY.

"Where did you get that idea [that society owes a criminal, education and moral development]? Got it from Beccaria, Voltaire, Romilly, Dumont, Bentham,—men, who, if they ever were inside of a church door, would be held as heretics. But whence really came this idea? It came from the great normal root of Christianity,—the sacredness of the individual. . . . There are men called infidels who really are Christians, as there are men calling themselves Christians who really are infidels without suspecting it. That man is a Christian whose life and ethics grow out of the central root of Christianity,—no matter, if in his ignorance or his prejudice he disowns the name." (Wendell Phillips, quoted in *Freedom and Fellowship in Religion*, pp. 418, 419.)

2(p. 5.) DISTINCTIVE CHRISTIANITY.

It is sometimes urged that the true meaning of Christianity must be determined by the doctrines and customs of the majority of nominal Christians; and, therefore, that the spiritual despotism of the Roman Church, the belief in everlasting perdition, and the like, must be regarded as essential to Christianity. But such a notion is strangely unhistorical and unscholarly. It confounds accidental accretions and superstitious perversions with the real spirit and distinctive idea of Christianity. A careful study can easily point out when and how these accretions and perversions came into the Church, and even in what sense they were inevitable and for a time necessary. The spiritual despotism of the Roman Church, for instance, though thoroughly unchristian, was needful for the discipline, through many centuries, of the barbarian races which the Church converted. But true Christianity requires every man to be "fully persuaded in his own mind" (Rom. xiv. 5) and to follow the guidance of "the spirit of truth" (John xvi. 13).

The Messianic phrases of the New Testament are not essential to Christianity; for Jesus put *himself* forward only so far as he saw that his leadership was necessary for the success of his gospel at that time, but he recognized that ultimately his truth alone should "judge the world." (John xii. 48, 49; xiv. 16, 17; xvi. 13; compare 1 Cor. xv. 28.)

3(p. 5.) CHRISTIAN MORALITY.

"The originality of Christ's morality is not to be sought for in any enunciation of a new duty, so much as in the concentration of all duty into the passion of love." (*His Star in the East*, p. 23.) "The manifestation of God's Fatherhood which was made in Jesus is the shaping power of Christian morals,—that which makes the morality of Christian life distinct and different from any other that the world has seen." "It was in his sonship to God that the secret of the holiness of Jesus lay." (Phillips Brooks, *Influence of Jesus*, pp. 22, 69.)

4(p. 7.) STOICISM.

Historical Christianity has often been ignorant, superstitious and bigoted. The mass of the early Christians were not a very interesting class of people to a superficial observer. The ethical nobility of the Stoics, their broad tolerance and generous culture, win our admiration and sympathy. But the ignorance and superstition and bigotry of the Christian Church were *leavened* by a sentiment which Stoicism lacked, and which has shown a *power of transforming character*, that was never found in Stoicism. And thereby, in a certain sense, the last became first; Christianity has distanced Stoicism.

5(p. 8.) TENDERNESS TO BRUTE LIFE.

Lecky speaks of an indifference to human suffering, as appearing more or less in all Eastern nations and as often associated with tenderness to animals. (I., p. 289.) Christianity, reacting from this morbidness, and emphasizing the true value of human life, temporarily repressed the sentiment of tenderness to animals (i. pp. 167-168) which Jesus himself must have felt (Matt. vi. 26; x. 29).

6(p. 9.) THE LATER GOSPEL IN MATTHEW.

Interesting traces of the humanitarian gospel are found in the narrative attributed to Matthew, which confirm the narrative of Luke and the epistles of Paul.

(1) Matt. xi. 19: "The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners."

(2) Matt. xviii. 11, "The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost."

(3) Matt. xx. 28, "The Son of Man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

(4) Matt. xxi. 31, "Jesus saith unto them, Verily, I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you." The word "harlots" occurs, in the gospels, only here and in Luke xv. 30; and the phrase "publicans and harlots" nowhere but here. It is a valuable text as showing that by "sinners" in the phrase "publicans and sinners" is meant fallen women.

7(pp. 11, 12.) THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

The precept of love to enemies is a precept of mere forgiveness of injuries and of general benevolence *without any hint of a duty of self-sacrifice*. It is this element of self-sacrifice that constitutes the great advance of the later gospel upon the earlier.

The Book of Jonah teaches the impartial mercy of God to all races of men and even to brute animals; while the Sermon on the Mount may be understood as referring to fellow-Hebrews only, the neighbors of those who were listening to the Sermon.

8(p. 13.) THE GOSPEL OF THE CROSS.

The Sermon on the Mount contains a gospel of (moral and spiritual) *self-discipline*; the later discourses and parables, a gospel of (humanitarian) *self-sacrifice*. Both belong to Christianity; but the latter is its distinctive contribution to the religious life of man. The former gospel has no cross; for the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount could not have excited any bitter opposition and caused the death of Jesus. But the latter gospel is distinctively the gospel of the Crucified One, and was so preached by Paul. For it was the broad and tender humanity of Jesus,

subordinating all scruples about ritual and Sabbath-keeping and even the narrow patriotism of his nation, to the love and service of his fellow-men, from the day when he healed the paralytic in Capernaum, and eat with publicans and sinners, and broke the Sabbath (Mark ii. 1-iii. 6), and praised the faith of the Gentile centurion (Matt. viii. 5-13),—it was this spirit, finding at last clear utterance in the later parables, that gave offence to the priestly and patriot party. The "cross of Christ" and the "blood of Christ," or the "blood of the cross," as used by Paul, refer to the humanitarian gospel and are symbolic of the ideas and the power of this gospel.

⁹(p. 14.) REVIVALISM.

The preaching of such revivalists as Moody, though often coarse, crude, and irrational, is yet *intensely Christian* in its *essential spirit*, because it emphasizes the preciousness of every soul, and thus awakens hope and courage and the longing for a better life in even the most degraded. It is a good deal better than the Rationalist preaching that has lost the Christian "key-note."

¹⁰(p. 15.) THE CHRISTIAN TEST AND METHOD.

The test laid down in the parable of the Sheep and the Goats is not ethical righteousness, but love. It welcomes the Buddhist rather than the Stoic, the Pharisee or the Puritan. For Jesus here speaks of the humane heathen as "the righteous,"—which is as much as to say that *love is the highest righteousness*. And in the same spirit Paul says that love is the fulfilling of the law.

The change in Jesus' idea of righteousness illustrates how he "grew in wisdom" all through his ministry. At his baptism, he used the word in its *ritual* sense. (Matt. iii. 15.) In the Sermon on the Mount, the idea was chiefly or wholly *ethical*. At the end of his ministry, it was *humanitarian*. Thus his ministry passed through the lower and higher Judaic stages, becoming at last distinctively Christian.

The main argument of the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians is the insufficiency of either ritual or merely ethical righteousness, compared with "faith which worketh by love." By "faith" Paul meant the habitual *upward* look of reverence, aspiration and trust (this upward look is *essential religion*, or true *piety*), and by "love" the habitual *outward* look of sympathy and self-sacrifice, which is the essence of Christian *morality*. The aim of Christianity is not "the righteousness which is of the law," that is, the righteousness (whether ritual or ethical) which is attained by self-culture *merely*, but "the righteousness which is of faith" and "love." (Rom. x. 6; Gal. v. 5; Phil. iii. 9; Rom. xiii., 10; 1 Cor. viii. 1; Gal. v. 6; Eph. iii. 17.)

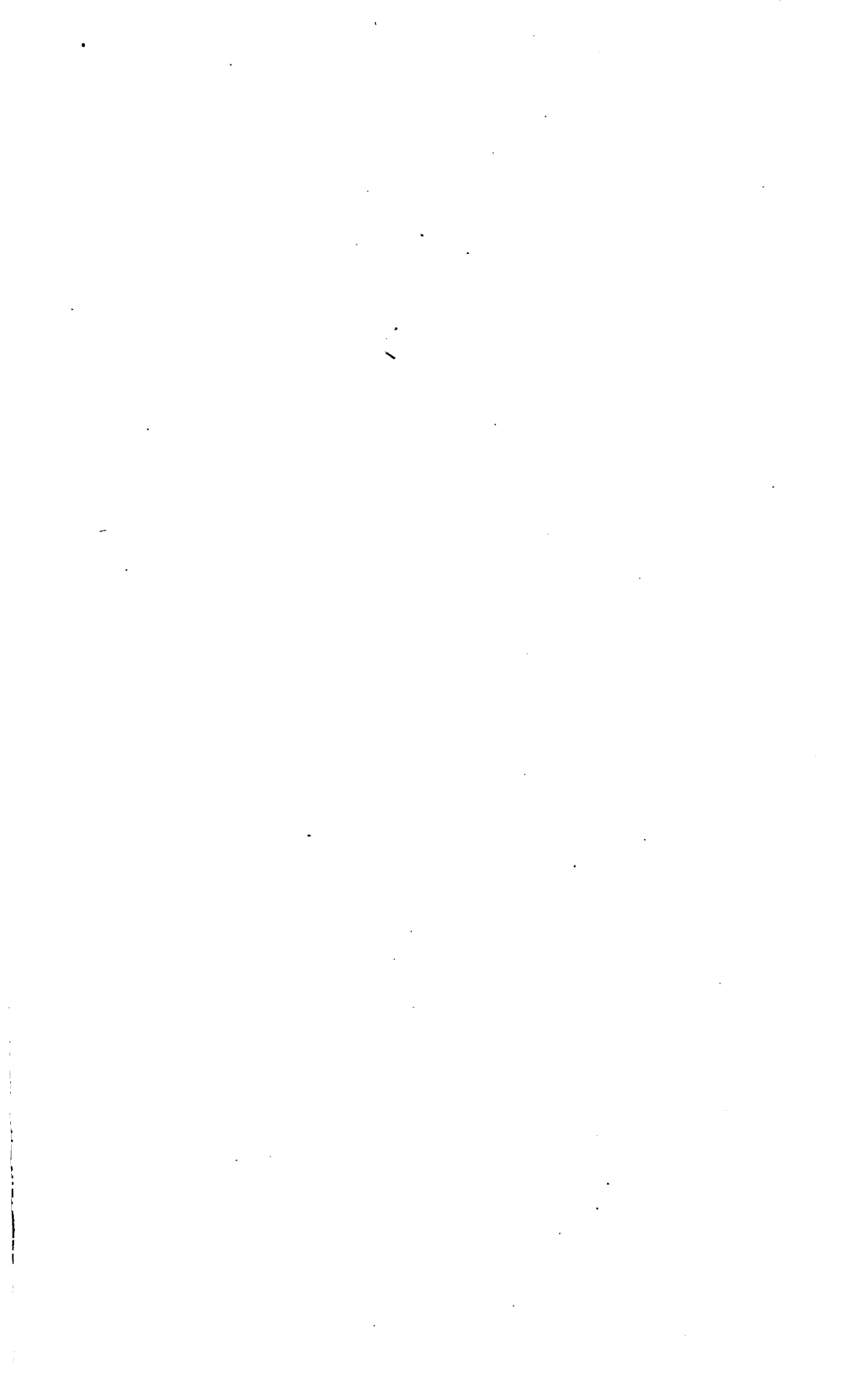
¹¹(p. 16.) CHRISTIAN PHILANTHROPY.

The story of the monk Telemachus, who came into the amphitheatre at Rome (404 A.D.) to protest against the gladiatorial games and was stoned to death by the angry crowd (Lecky, ii. p. 37), but by this martyrdom created a revulsion of feeling that abolished these games throughout the Empire, illustrates how the self-sacrificing enthusiasm of Christianity could effect what Stoicism failed to do, and could thus educate the world in a new humanitarianism.

There was much practical philanthropy in civilized Europe at the Christian era,—as there has also been in Buddhist lands,—but Christianity brought a higher ideal of philanthropy, and thereby inspired a more potent enthusiasm. Says Lecky, "It has indissolubly united, in the minds of men, the idea of Supreme Goodness with that of active and constant Benevolence." (*European Morals*, ii. p. 85.) "The active, habitual, and detailed charity of private persons, which is so conspicuous a feature in all Christian societies, was scarcely known in antiquity." "See the famous epistle of Julian to Arsacius, where he declares that it is shameful that the Galileans should support, not only their own, *but also the heathen poor*." (Lecky, ii. pp. 78-82.)

¹²(p. 16.) "FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED."

Jesus died *for all mankind*, in the sense that he died in consequence of his reverent love for all men, even the most degraded.







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